

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

OF

POPULAR

LITERATURE, SCIENCE, AND ART

Fifth Series

ESTABLISHED BY WILLIAM AND ROBERT CHAMBERS, 1832

No. 441.—VOL. IX.

SATURDAY, JUNE 11, 1892.

PRICE 1½*d.*

GROUSE DISEASE.

MAN is not the only sufferer from epidemics. These dreaded scourges are indeed the heritage of all flesh, and there are good grounds for the statement that no family of living beings can claim a happy exemption. The fact is becoming daily more apparent that man and animals are common subjects for many similar diseases, of which tuberculosis, anthrax, and diphtheria are not the least frequent; and many readers will call to mind how, during the recent epidemics of influenza, a somewhat similar sickness was extensively prevalent among horses. Such considerations should surely quicken our sense of kinship in suffering with the lower animals; and it is satisfactory to reflect that they have participated in no small degree in the beneficent application of hygienic laws.

But the epidemic which this paper will treat of is, like salmon disease, one which, so far as we yet know, does not affect the animals more closely associated with man in the domestic relations of life. It is the mysterious Grouse Disease, an illness of great fatality, and whose origin has given rise to a large amount of controversial literature. Grouse disease is in many respects an exceedingly interesting one, illustrating as it does a law of widespread generality among epidemics, that whenever the population becomes excessive, disease sets in apparently with the purpose of restoring by violence the balance of living creatures.

It was only at the beginning of the present century that a hitherto unrecognised disease, fatally affecting the grouse of our British moors, began to be talked about; and as the century grew older and grouse moors became more and more valuable, the sickness increased in severity, and in the enormous number of birds which fell under its ravages. As the value of moors became more apparent to the proprietors, great efforts were made to increase the head of game; and the natural enemies of the grouse—the native Carnivora and Falconidæ—were exposed to the

destructive hostility of gamekeepers. The result was overstocking; the diseased and weakly individuals no longer fell a natural prey to the hawks and weasels, and just as in human communities, where a like condition of over-population prevails, epidemic disease arose, sweeping away multitudes of the healthy along with the weakly and unfit.

To the modern mind the term epidemic, as applied to disease, instinctively calls up the idea of fever and germs spread broadcast over the land. But for many years the true nature of grouse disease was ill understood.

We will briefly mention some of the theories once stoutly maintained. Cold and protracted springs, the extension of sheep-farming, improper management of the heather, unsuitable food, the presence of intestinal worms, have severally been held responsible by their various advocates. Be it remarked in passing that most of the above causes are depressing in their nature, and liable to diminish the vitality of the birds. Another very obvious suggestion was that the destruction of animals which preyed upon the grouse allowed a weakly stock to survive, which became the starting-point of disease.

The pillar of the theory that grouse disease is caused by intestinal worms was the late Dr Cobbold, a great authority on the subject of Entozoa. The grouse, like many other animals, is extremely prone to become the host of parasitic worms, and its alimentary tract is often found crowded with those inconvenient guests. The tapeworm is very common in the grouse; but in those birds found dead or dying on the moors, Dr Cobbold often found immense numbers of an extremely minute hematoe worm, which, from its fineness, he named *Strongylus gracilis*. Grouse disease he considered was due to this minute annelid.

But there were many things about grouse disease which were inexplicable on this theory alone. The immense and rapid mortality was sufficient to suggest doubts, along with the fact that many of the birds dead of grouse disease were in good condition and of full plumage, a

state inconsistent with the slow wasting which would ensue from such a cause as entozoa. Consequently, speculation took another direction, and the opinion—previously held by some close observers—gained ground that grouse disease was an epidemic of a highly infectious and fatal kind, comparable in its causes and progress to the epidemic scourges of man. This theory was strongly held by Dr Farquharson, now member of Parliament for Aberdeenshire; and by their careful post-mortem examinations, Professor Young of Glasgow University, and Mr Andrew Wilson, found strong confirmatory evidence in the presence of constant anatomical lesions of the lungs, liver, alimentary tract, and lining membranes. Among the most recent workers on the subject has been Dr Klein, the eminent authority on micro-organisms. He has put the matter on the firm basis of experiment by discovering the germ which produces the disease, and by its inoculation into other animals showing its communicability.

The micro-organism of grouse disease is an extremely minute bacillus, whose elongation is so slight that at first sight it is hardly distinguishable from a coccus. It is found in the blood of the affected grouse, in the lungs in great quantity, in the liver, and in the walls of the alimentary tract. The lungs are acutely inflamed, and this is indeed the essential and characteristic feature—the disease is an infectious pneumonia. But besides this, other organs are sometimes inflamed or congested. Birds inoculated with the bacillus soon show symptoms of severe illness. They become listless and heavy, the breathing is rapid and laboured, the appetite disappears, there is thirst, and often diarrhoea; finally, they become comatose, and die or gradually recover. At an early stage the plumage is ruffled, and the eyes are dim. On the moors where the disease is severe the grouse are found dead or dying in great numbers in the vicinity of water, having flocked there in order to quench the severe thirst caused by the fever.

To sum up briefly—grouse disease is an epidemic fever, the chief symptom of which is inflammation of the lungs. It is caused by a bacillus; and the predisposing causes are over-population, undoubtedly assisted by any depressing conditions to which the grouse may be exposed, such as protracted cold and wet spring-times, and unsuitable or insufficient food. Of recent years the disease has been less virulent on our moors. This is largely due to systematic reduction of the head of game within reasonable limits. The eagle, the falcon, and their kindred, are again becoming more numerous on our hillsides with beneficial results; and by the proper exercise of these prudent methods, there is every reason to believe that grouse disease will be prevented from again assuming disastrous proportions. At the same time, little hope can be afforded of its extinction. The grouse cannot be readily caught and vaccinated, even if it were likely that a preventive vaccine were ever to be discovered. And there are good grounds for the belief that grouse disease is not confined to one family of birds. It is quite possible that it may be a general avian scourge. Dr Klein's researches on this point are not yet completely worked out. Inoculation of the pigeon produced no result; crows were found to be slightly susceptible, as also were sparrows;

the common yellow bunting took the disease with extreme readiness, not only by inoculation, but by infection. Some inoculated birds were on one occasion, in Dr Klein's laboratory, placed beside a cage of untouched and healthy buntings. In a couple of days most of the latter had succumbed, and the bacillus of grouse disease was on microscopic examination found abundantly in their tissues. A more excellent illustration of the highly infectious nature of the illness could hardly be obtained. Inoculation of the common mouse also proved highly successful, suggesting that this form of infectious pneumonia may not be confined to the Aves alone, but may also affect certain of the lesser mammalia. The fact is that infectious forms of pneumonia belong to a class of diseases widely prevalent among the higher animals. It is fortunate that they seldom assume so excessive a degree of severity as when sweeping the feathered denizens of our Highland hills away by tens of thousands.

THE IVORY GATE.*

By WALTER BESANT.

CHAPTER XXII.—I AM EDMUND GRAY.

On Saturday afternoon, the policeman on day-duty at Gray's Inn was standing near the southern portals of that venerable Foundation in conversation with the boy who dispenses the newspapers, from a warehouse constructed in the eastern wall of the archway. It was half-past three by the clock and a fine day, which was remarkable for the season—August—and the year. The sun poured upon the dingy old courts, making them dingier instead of brighter. Where the paint of the windows and door-posts is faded and dirty—where the panes are mostly in want of cleaning—where there are no flowers in the windows—where there are no trees or leaves in the Square—where the bricks want pointing, and where the soot has gathered in every chink and blackens every cranny—then the sunshine of summer only makes a dingy court shabbier. Gray's Inn in July and August, unless these months are as the August of the year of grace 1891, looks old, but not venerable. Age should be clean and nicely dressed: age should wear a front to conceal her baldness: age should assume false teeth to disguise those gums stripped of their ivory. It was felt by the policeman. 'We want a washin' and a brightenin' in this old place,' he remarked to the journalist. 'We want somethin' younger than them old laundresses,' said the newspaper boy. Great is the Goddess Coincidence. Even while he uttered this aspiration, a young lady entered the gate and passed into the Inn.

'Ha!' breathed the policeman, softly.

'Ah!' sighed the journalist.

She was a young lady of adorable face and form, surpassing the wildest dreams either of policeman or of paper-man—both of whom possessed the true poetic temperament. She was clothed in raiment mystic, wonderful, such as seldom indeed gets as far east as Gray's Inn, something in gray or silver gray with an open

front and a kind of jacket. She passed them rapidly, and walked through the passage into the Square.

'No. 22,' said the policeman. 'Now, who does she want at No. 22? Who's on the ground-floor of 22?'

'Right hand—Architects and Surveyors. Left hand—Universal Translators.'

'Perhaps she's a Universal Translator. They must be all gone by this time. The first floor is lawyers. They're all gone too. I saw the clerks march out at two o'clock. Second floor—there's Mr Carstone on the left, and Mr Edmund Gray on the right. Perhaps it's Mr Carstone she's after. I hope it isn't him. He's a gentleman with fine manners, and they do say a great scholar, but he's a Lushington, and a sweet young thing like that ought not to marry a man who is brought home every other night too tipsy to stand. Or there's Mr Gray—the old gent—perhaps she's his daughter. What's Mr Edmund Gray by calling, Joe?'

'Nobody knows. He don't often come. An old gentleman—been in the Inn a long time, for years. Lives in the country, I suppose, and does no work. Lives on other people's work—my work—honest working-men's work,' said the boy, who was Socialist and advanced.

'Ah! There's something up about Mr Gray. People are coming to inquire for him. First, it was a young gentleman: very affable he was—and free with his money—most likely other people's money. He wanted to know a good deal about Mr Gray—more than I could tell him—wanted to know how often he came, and what he was like when he did come—and would I tell him all I knew. He went to the old laundress afterwards.—Then it was a little old man—I know him by sight—uses the *Salutation Parlour* of an evening—he wanted to know all about Mr Gray too. No half-crown in that quarter, though. He's been spying and watching for him—goes and hides up the passage on the other side of the Square. Kind of spider he is. He's watching him for no good, I'll bet. Perhaps the young lady wants to find out about him too.—Joe, there's something up at No. 22. The old gentleman isn't in his chambers, I believe. She'll come out again presently, and it'll be: "Oh, Mr Policeman, could you very kindly tell me how I can find Mr Edmund Gray?" With a shilling perhaps, and perhaps not. I wonder what she wants with Mr Edmund Gray? Sometimes these old chaps break out in the most surprising manner. Joe, if you ever go into the service, you'll find the work hard and the pay small. But there's compensations in learnin' things. If you want to know human nature, go into the Force.'

'There's old Mr Langhorne, up at the top.'

'So there is. But no young lady wants to see that poor old chap. He's got no friends, young nor old—no friends and no money. Just now, he's terrible hard up. Took a shillin' off o' me last Sunday to get a bit of dinner with. Fine thing—isn't it, Joe?—to be a gentleman and a Barrister all your life, isn't it—and to end like that? Starvation in a garret—eh?—Look out. She will be coming down directly.'

But she did not come down. Two hours and more passed, and she did not come down.

The visitor was Elsie Arundel. She walked

up the stairs to the second floor. Here she stopped. There was a black door, closed, on the right of her, and another black door, closed, on the left of her. On the lintel of one was the name of Mr F. W. Carstone. On the lintel of the other was that of Mr Edmund Gray. Elsie knocked with her parasol at the latter door. There was no reply. 'The old laundress,' she murmured, 'told me that Saturday afternoon was my best chance of finding him. I will wait.' She sat down with hesitation on the stairs leading to the third floor—they were not too clean—and waited.

She was going to do a very plucky thing—a dangerous thing. She had made a discovery connecting Mr Dering directly with this Edmund Gray. She had learned that he came to the office in a strange condition, hypnotic, bringing things from Edmund Gray. She now suspected that the only person who carried on the forgeries on Mr Dering was Mr Dering himself, acted on and controlled by Edmund Gray—and she wanted to find out who this Edmund Gray was. She would confront him and tax him with the crime. It was dangerous, but he could not kill her. Besides, he was described as quite an elderly man. He was also described as a benevolent man, a charitable man, a kindly man: and he wrote letters brimful of the most cheerful optimism. Yet he was carrying on a series of complicated forgeries. She resolved to wait for him. She would wait till sundown, if necessary, for him.

The place was very quiet. All the offices were closed and the clerks gone. Most of the men who lived in the Chambers were away, out of town, gone on holiday, gone away from Saturday till Monday. Everything was quite quiet and still: the traffic in Holborn was only heard as a continuous murmur which formed part of the stillness: the policeman, who had now said all he had to say to the newspaper boy, was walking slowly and with heavy tread round the Court. The Inn was quite empty and deserted and still. Only, overhead there was the footfall of a man who walked up and down his room steadily, never stopping or ceasing or changing the time, like the beat of a pendulum. Elsie began to wonder, presently, who this man could be, and if he had nothing better to do than to pace his chamber all day long, when the sun was bright and the leaves on the trees and the flowers in full bloom?

The clock struck four: Elsie had been waiting half an hour: still Mr Edmund Gray did not arrive: still the steady beat of the footstep continued overhead.

The clock struck five. Still that steady footfall. Still Elsie sat upon the stairs waiting in patience.

When the clock struck six, the footsteps stopped—or changed. Then a door overhead opened and shut and the steps came down the stairs. Elsie rose and stood on one side. An old man came down—tall and thin, close-shaven, pale, dressed in a black frock-coat, worn to a shiny polish in all those parts which take a polish—a shabby old man, whose hat seemed hardly able to stand upright: and a gentleman—which was perfectly clear from his bearing—a gentleman in the last stage of poverty and decay.

He started, surprised to see a young lady on the stairs.

'You are waiting for Mr Carstone?' he asked. 'He is out of town. He will not be back till Monday. Nobody ever comes back before Monday. From Saturday to Monday I have the Inn to myself. All that time there are no slammers and no strangers. It is an agreeable retreat, if only'— He shook his head and stopped short.

'I am not waiting for Mr Carstone. I am waiting for Mr Edmund Gray.'

'He is very uncertain. No one knows when he comes or whither he goeth. I would not wait if I were you. He may come to-day, or tomorrow, or at any time. He comes on Sunday morning, often. I hear him coming up-stairs after the chapel bell stops. He is a quiet neighbour—no slammer or trumper. I would not wait, I say, if I were you.'

'I will wait a little longer. I am very anxious to see Mr Gray.'

'He should wait for you,' Mr Langhorne replied, politely. 'The stairs are not a fit resting-place for you. This old Inn is too quiet for such as you. Mirth and joy belong to you—Silence and rest to such as me. Even slammering does not, I daresay, greatly displease youth and beauty. Chambers are not for young ladies. Beauty looks for life and love and admiration. They do not exist here. Run away, young lady—leave the Inn to the poor old men, like me, who cannot get away if they would.'

'Thank you—I must see Mr Edmund Gray, if I can. It will not hurt me to wait a little longer.'

'You wish to see Edmund Gray. So do I. So do I. You are a friend of his. Perhaps, therefore, you will do as well. Those who are his friends are like unto him for kindness of heart. Those who wish to be his friends must try to be like unto him. Young lady, I will treat you as the friend of that good man. You can act for him.'

'What can I do if I do act for him?' But there was a hungry eagerness in the man's eyes which made her divine what she could do.

'It is Saturday.' He replied without looking at her. He turned away his head. He spoke to the stair-window. 'To-morrow is Sunday. I have before this, on one or two occasions, found myself as I do now—without money. I have borrowed of Mr Carstone and of Mr Edmund Gray. Sometimes, I have paid it back—not always. Lend me—for Mr Edmund Gray—if you are not rich, he will give it back to you—the sum of five shillings—say, five shillings. Otherwise, I shall have nothing to eat until Monday, when Mr Carstone returns.'

'Nothing to eat? Nothing at all to eat?' Beggars in the street often make the same confession, but somehow their words fail to carry conviction. Mr Langhorne, however, did carry conviction.

The old man shook his head. 'I had some food yesterday at this time. Since then I have had nothing. There was neither tea nor bread in my rooms for breakfast. When the clock struck six, my dinner hour, I thought I would walk along the street and look at the things to eat which are placed in the shop windows.

That relieves a little. But to-morrow will be a bad time—a very bad time. I shall lie in bed. Oh! I have gone through it before. Sometimes—he dropped his voice—'I have been sore tempted to take something—No—no; don't think I have given way. No—no. Why—I should be disbarred. Not yet—not yet.'

Elsie opened her purse. It contained two sovereigns and a shilling or two. 'Take all,' she said eagerly. 'Take all the gold, and leave me the silver. Take it instantly.' She stamped her foot.

He hesitated. 'All?' he asked. 'All? Can you spare it? I can never repay'

'Take it!' she said again, imperiously.

He obeyed: he took the gold out of the purse with trembling fingers. Then he raised his rickety old hat—was that a tear that stole into his eyes, or the rheum of old age?—and slowly walked down the stairs, holding by the banisters. He was weak, poor wretch! with hunger. But it was his dinner hour, and he was going to have his dinner.

Elsie sat down again.

It was half-past six—she had been waiting for three hours—when other footsteps entered the house. Elsie sprang to her feet: she turned pale; her heart stood still; for now she realised that if this step was truly that of the man she expected, she was about to confront a person certainly of the deepest criminality, and possibly capable of villainy in any other direction. The steps mounted the stairs. I really think that the bravest persons in the world are those who before the event look forward to it with the utmost apprehension. They know, you see, what the dangers are. Elsie was going to face a great danger. She was going to find out, alone and unaided, who this man was, and why and how he worked these deeds of darkness.

The footsteps mounted higher: from the door to the top of the stairs it took but a single minute, yet to Elsie it seemed half an hour, so rapid were her thoughts. Then the man mounted the last flight of steps. Heavens! Elsie was fain to cry out for sheer amazement. She cried out: she caught at the banisters. For, before her, taking the key of Mr Edmund Gray's Chambers from his waistcoat pocket, was none other than Mr Dering himself!

Yes. An elderly man, of truly benevolent aspect, his coat open flying all abroad, his face soft, gracious, smiling, and full of sunshine, his hat just the least bit pushed back, his left hand in his pocket. Elsie thought again of her portrait at home, in which she had transformed her guardian—and here he was in the flesh—transformed according to her portrait!

She stared at him with an amazement that bereft her of speech and of motion. She could only stare. Even if her mother's voice were suddenly to call out to her that it is rude for little girls to stare, she could not choose but stare. For Mr Dering looked at her with that kind of surprise in his eyes which means, 'What have we here to do with beautiful young ladies?' There was not the least sign of any knowledge of her. He looked at her as one suffers the eyes to rest for a moment without interest upon a stranger and a casual passenger in the street.

He opened his outer door, and was about to

walk in, when she recovered some presence of mind—not much. She stepped forward. 'Can you tell me, please, how I could find Mr Edmund Gray?'

'Certainly,' he smiled—'nothing easier. I am Edmund Gray.'

'You!—you—Edmund Gray? Oh! No—no. You cannot be Edmund Gray—you yourself! All her beautiful theory of hypnotic influence vanished. No mesmerism or magnetic influence at all. 'You yourself?' she repeated, 'you—Edmund Gray?'

'Assuredly. Why not? Why should a man not be himself?'

'Oh! I don't understand. The world is going upside down. I took you—took you for another person.'

He laughed gently. 'Truly, I am none other than Edmund Gray—always Edmund Gray. My first name I can never change if I wished, because it is my baptismal name. The latter I do not wish to change, because it is our name ancestral.'

'I asked because—because—I fancied a resemblance to another person. Were you ever told that you are much like a certain other person?'

'No; I think not. Resemblances, however, are extremely superficial. No two living creatures are alike. We are alone, each living out his life in the great *Cosmus*, quite alone—unlike any other living creature. However, I am Edmund Gray, young lady. It isn't often that I receive a visit from a young lady in these chambers. If you have no other doubt upon that point, will you let me ask you, once more, how I can help you? And will you come in and sit down?'

'Oh! it is wonderful,' she cried—'wonderful! most wonderful!' Again she controlled herself. 'Are you,' she asked again, 'the same Mr Edmund Gray who wrote the letter to the *Times* the other day?'

'Certainly. There is no other person, I believe, of the name in this Inn. Have you read that letter?'

'Yes—oh, yes.'

'And you have come here to talk to me about that letter?'

'Yes—yes.' She caught at the hint. 'That is why I came—to talk about that letter. I came in the hope of finding the author of that letter at home.'

He threw open the door of his sitting-room.

'Will you step in? We can talk quite quietly here. The Inn at this hour on Saturday is almost deserted.' He closed the outer door and followed his visitor into the sitting-room. 'This,' he went on, 'is the quietest place in the whole of London. We have not, in this Square, the stately elms of the old garden, but still we have our little advantages—spacious rooms—quiet always in the evening and on Sundays. A few racketty young men, perhaps; but for one who reads and meditates, no better place in London. Now, young lady, take the easy-chair and sit down. We will talk. There are very few people who talk to me about my theories. That is because I am old, so that I have lost my friends, and because my views are in advance of the world. No man is so lonely as the man born before his time. He is the prophet, you know,

who must be stoned because he prophesies things unintelligible and therefore uncomfortable—even terrifying. I shall be very glad to talk a little with you.—Now, allow me first to open these letters.'

Elsie sat down and looked about her. She was in a large low wainscoted room, with two windows looking upon the Square. The room was quite plainly but quite well furnished. There was a good-sized study table with drawers: a small table between the windows: a few chairs, a couch and an easy-chair: and a large bookcase filled with books—books on Socialism, George had told her. A door opened upon a smaller room: there was probably a bedroom at the back. A plain carpet covered the floor. Above the high old-fashioned mantel were two or three portraits of Socialist leaders. The room, if everything had not been covered with dust, would have been coldly neat: the chairs were all in their places: the window-blinds were half-way down, as the laundress thought was proper—millions of Londoners always keep their blinds half-way down—a subject which must some day be investigated by the Folklore Society: the curtains were neatly looped: it wanted only a Bible on a table at a window to make it the Front Parlour of a Dalston Villa. There were no flowers, no ornaments of any kind.

Mr Edmund Gray opened half-a-dozen letters lying on his table and glanced at them. There were a great many more waiting to be opened.

'All are from people who have read my letter,' he said. 'They share with me in the new Faith of a new Humanity. Happy is the man who strikes the note of leading at the right moment. Happy he who lights the lamp just when the darkness is beginning to be felt.—Yes, young lady, you are not the only one who has been drawn towards the doctrines of that letter. But I have no time to write to all of them. A letter makes one convert—a paragraph may make a thousand.'

Elsie rose from her chair. She had decided on her line. You have heard that her voice was curiously soft and winning—a voice that charms—a voice which would soothe a wild creature, and fill a young man's heart with whatever passion she chose to awaken. She had, besides, those soft eyes which make men surrender their secrets, part with their power and their strength. Did she know that she possessed all this power!—the girl who had no experience save of one man's love, and that the most natural, easy, and unromantic love in the world, when two who are brought up side by side and see each other every day, presently catch each other by the hand and walk for the future hand in hand without a word. Yet Delilah herself, the experienced, the crafty, the trained and taught—could not—did not—act more cleverly and craftily than this artless damsel. To be sure, she possessed great advantages over Delilah in the matter of personal charm.

'Oh!' she murmured softly, 'it is a shame that you should be expected to waste your valuable time in writing letters to these people. You must not do it. Your time is wanted for the world, not for individuals.'

'It is,' he replied—'it is. You have said it.'

'You are a Master—a Leader—a Prince in Israel—a Preacher—a Prophet.'

'I am—I am. You have said it. I should not myself have dared to say it. But I am.'

'No one can doubt it who has read that letter. Be my Master—too—as well as the Master of all these people who write to you.'

'Be your Master?' He blushed like a boy. 'Could I desire anything better?'

'My Father and my Master,' she added with a little change of colour. Girls take fright very easily, and perhaps this old gentleman might interpret the invitation—well—into something other than was meant.

'Yes—yes.' He held out his hand. She took it in her own—both her own soft hands, and bowed her head—her comely head—over it.

'I came to-day thinking only—Oh Delilah!—to thank you for your great and generous and noble words, which have put fresh heart into me. And now that I have thanked you, I am emboldened to ask a favour—'

'Anything, anything.'

'You will be my Master—you will teach me. Let me, in return, relieve you of this work.' She laid her hand on the pile of letters. Let me answer them for you. Let me be your Private Secretary. I have nothing to do. Let me work for you.' She looked into his face with the sweetest eyes and the most winning smile, and her voice warmed the old man's ear like soft music. Ah, Circe!—'Now that I have seen you—let me be your disciple, your most humble disciple, and—Ah, Siren!—let me be more, Edmund Gray—I cannot say Mr Gray—let me be more, Edmund Gray.' She laid her hand, her soft-gloved, dainty, delicate hand upon his, and it produced the effect of an electric battery gently handled. 'Let me be your Secretary.'

It was ten o'clock before Elsie reached home that evening, and she refused to tell them, even her own brother and her lover, where she had been or how she had spent her evening.

WHAT A TORPEDO BOAT IS LIKE.

ALTHOUGH it may safely be predicted that most of the excitement and romance of the next great naval war will be centred round the deeds of Torpedo Boats, it is curious that amongst most Englishmen the greatest ignorance exists as to the description and peculiarities of these 'wasps of the sea.' The fact of their being of such comparatively recent construction probably accounts for this, as the first torpedo boat ever built in this country was launched only so long ago as 1877. In that year an English mechanic had suddenly brought before the world, after years of anxious work and thought, the most terrible and wonderful weapon of naval warfare that had ever been invented, and in such a state of perfection that it disarmed all criticism. This weapon was the Whitehead torpedo, so named after its inventor. There had been several different kinds of torpedoes invented before this, but they were all of a very crude and unwieldy pattern. The Whitehead torpedo, on the contrary, was a marvel of mechanical construction.

It may be briefly described as being made of steel, about fourteen feet long, with a diameter of fourteen inches, and shaped like a cigar. In its nose, or pointed end, is contained the explosive; abaft this comes the air-chamber, containing the motive-power of the torpedo—namely, air compressed to a pressure of one thousand pounds to the square inch; abaft this, again, come the engines; then the chamber containing the apparatus for regulating the depth of the torpedo in the water; and astern of all, the two propellers for driving the weapon through the water.

The torpedo is fired or thrust out from a tube on the deck of the ship or torpedo boat, and immediately it touches the water, it adjusts itself to a depth of about ten feet, and makes a bee-line for the object aimed at. If it misses the enemy, a valve opens, and it sinks to the bottom beyond recovery, though this expensive contingency is avoided in peace-time. If it strikes a ship, however, the charge is exploded, and tears and rips the vessel's bottom right open; while the shock at the same time throws all her engines out of gear, and in fact cripples her completely, if indeed it does not send her to the bottom in a few minutes, as in the case of the *Blanco Encalada* last year. The latest development of this torpedo is a weapon eighteen inches in diameter, with a speed of thirty knots, and carrying two hundred pounds of gun-cotton!

Although the Whitehead torpedo was soon made part of the armament of every modern man-of-war, its advent also called into existence a class of vessel which was of a type entirely different from anything that had been seen afloat before. It was seen that the best way of using the torpedo effectually was to fire it from a vessel of great speed and small size, so that it might be brought all the more quickly into close range with the enemy; for it must be remembered that the aim of a torpedo becomes most uncertain at a greater distance than eight hundred yards; at the same time it was necessary at such close quarters that the vessel should offer as little target as possible to the enemy. The result of such a demand was the building of the class of vessels known now as torpedo boats.

The first torpedo boat ever launched was named the *Lightning*, built in 1877 by the firm of Messrs Thornycroft at Chiswick. Though only ninety feet long, her speed was nineteen knots, and this result was considered so remarkable that orders were given for several other boats of the same type. Russia and France lost little time in following suit. Since then the demand for greater length and higher speed has gone on increasing, and there seems no sign of the limit being reached as yet. The latest development is a boat built for the French Government with a length of one hundred and forty-seven feet, and a speed of twenty-six knots on the measured mile!

The full speed of the best English boats, however, does not show such a record as this, the highest obtained being only twenty-two and a half knots, a speed which is quite sufficient, however, for all likely purposes. There are two classes of torpedo boats in our navy—namely, first and second class, the latter being of a very small type, and mostly used for coast defence. The first-class boats, however, are meant for work at sea and for harassing an enemy's ports, and it is of a boat of this class, and of the life and surroundings of those on board her, that the following description is given.

'No. —, first-class torpedo boat,' was the name and style of the little craft which the writer commanded during last year's naval manoeuvres. She was only a fairly modern type of torpedo boat, being built by the firm of Thornycroft in 1885, and could at a push work up to a speed of about eighteen knots. Although only sixty-five tons in weight, and one hundred and twenty-five feet in length, her engines were seven hundred and fifty horse-power, or nearly twelve horse-power to every ton, an enormous amount of energy to store up in such a small compass. One would imagine that to stand such a strain the boat would have to be built of very strong and rigid materials; yet she was only made of a mere skin of steel, less than a quarter of an inch thick, supported by light beams and frames of the same material. The deck, also of steel, was flush fore and aft, and would have made quite a decent promenade if it had not been so crowded up with gear and fittings. Right astern was perched the 'ship's boat,' a tiny little dingey, just about fit to carry one passenger and a crew of two men. Then came the 'quarter-deck,' the only decently clear space along the whole length of the deck; and before this, the after 'conning tower,' with a torpedo tube on each side of it; farther on, amidships, came the engine-room hatchways and the large raking funnel; and before the funnel, again, a Nordenfelt machine gun, and another conning tower and torpedo tubes. Abaft the funnel also stood a large electric search-light projector, the light for which was supplied by small dynamo, down on the lower deck. The two torpedoes which the boat carried were placed one in the forward pair of tubes, and one aft in one of the after pair. A small impulse charge of about four ounces of powder was all that was necessary to thrust the torpedo out of the tube into the water, the aiming being done by training the tube in the direction required. The forecastle was comparatively clear; but little advantage could be derived from that fact, as once in a seaway the forepart of the boat was practically under water. It can easily be seen, therefore, that there was little room to stretch one's legs whilst at sea; but as a matter of fact there was quite enough to do in hanging on to the rails round the deck and preventing one's self from being pitched or rolled overboard.

Although the hull of the boat had but three feet of freeboard, there was far more room down below than would be imagined on looking at her from the outside.

The three officers—namely, captain, sub-lieutenant, and gunner—had a very decent little crib, consisting of a pantry and a neatly-fitted

and compact little 'wardroom'; the upholstered locker seats on each side of the table served the purpose of a couch for the night, for of course there was no such luxury as hammocks or beds on board; and the bed-clothes consisted of a thick warm 'duffle suit,' similar to that worn by the figures in the Arctic Show at the Naval Exhibition. The quarters for the crew of thirteen men forward were very roomy, too, considering the size of the boat; and the sleeping accommodation consisted of cork mattresses laid on the deck, with duffle suits also, to sleep in. The seats and mess tables were made to hinge back from the wall, so that they could be placed out of the way when not actually in use. Of course there were storerooms for provisions and other necessaries; and taking the boat altogether, one might easily imagine on a fine day, when everything was dry and clean, that torpedo-boat life was not half a bad one.

So long as the sea is quite smooth and the weather warm this inference may be fairly true; but directly the wind gives a sign of freshening, or the sea begins to get the slightest bit rough, then indeed life on board a torpedo boat becomes a trying one with a vengeance. Men who have never known what sea-sickness is during all their life at sea get thoroughly 'turned up' with the awful motion and vibration. As the flying little craft cuts through the waves, a continual deluge of swirl and foam rushes over and along her deck from bow and stern; all the hatches are perforce screwed down, and those below have to exist on what little air gets down through the ventilators. Every few seconds the vessel's bow is caught by a wave, thrown up in the air high enough to take the keel out of water, and comes down with a smacking thud that almost threatens to rip her bottom right open. At times a bigger wave than the others will come toppling over and look as if it were going to overwhelm the little craft completely; but still she manages to come up again all right, only with the disadvantage, perhaps, of having the sea down the funnel and the furnace fires nearly out. Although the fittings of the boat are all fixed and made to stand a lot of knocking about, it is wonderful what a pandemonium the deck below soon becomes in bad weather. The wardroom table, although screwed firmly down to the deck, is shaken and wrenches from its fastenings, and ends by collapsing altogether; the little cooking-range forward suffers a like fate, and the cook has a merry time of it picking up a mixture of red-hot coals, pots and pans, and half-cooked eatables; or perhaps a thumping green sea smashes in the after-skylight, floods the cabin, and makes pea-soup of everything in the place. The men in the engine-room have to be very careful if they do not want to get uncomfortably mixed up with the machinery; but the men in the stoke-hole, curiously enough, are the best off in the boat; being amidships and down below, they experience the least motion, and it is fortunate they do, for stoking the fires of a torpedo boat under forced draught is difficult work, and decidedly trying in rough weather.

The boat during action is steered from inside the conning tower; but on other occasions the deck-wheel is used, as almost any amount of spray and cold weather is preferable to being

half suffocated below. A few days' life in a sea-going torpedo boat is enough to harden any man; and yet, in spite of its many hardships, there is no life more really liked by the officers and men of the navy. Its chief charm no doubt lies in the fact that it is what blue-jackets call a 'piratical life,' with none of the monotony of an ordinary man-of-war, but with every element of excitement and adventure; and whatever the warlike usefulness of torpedo boats may be, there can be no doubt that they are the best training-ships in the world for instilling into our sailors an enormous amount of energy and pluck.

JACK MOORE'S TEMPTATION.

CHAPTER II.

ONE day Jack made up his mind to pay a visit to Russell Square and beg his uncle's forgiveness for his past folly. After office hours he turned his face towards Bloomsbury with a lighter heart than he had known for many a day. But when he reached the familiar house, a board stared him in the face on which was inscribed, 'To Let.'

Jack's heart sank like lead. He was so utterly nonplussed by this unexpected rebuff, that he turned away without the idea occurring to him that it would be quite easy to go down to the office of Tredinnick & Morgan and ascertain his uncle's present address. The sight of the deserted house had bewildered him.

As he walked down Oxford Street, as ill-luck would have it, he met Harcourt, who greeted him with apparent heartiness, and invited him to dine with him at his club. Jack accepted the invitation mechanically; and the two friends jumped into a hansom, and were driven off to the delectable resort known as 'The Revellers.' It is unnecessary to record how the evening was spent. It resulted for Jack next morning in a racking headache, a dull feeling of remorse, and empty pockets. Worse still, he had given Harcourt his note of hand for fifty pounds, in order to pay his losses at cards to sundry 'Revellers' who demanded payment in cash.

Then the old dissipated life began again. Jack had the sense to keep his post at the Three Kingdoms Assurance Office, and to do his work there in a satisfactory manner. But his evenings were spent with Harcourt, who seemed to have regained all his former influence over him. Sometimes Jack thought of seeking out his uncle and confessing everything; but he always put off doing so under one pretext or other. Every quarter he received a cheque for twelve pounds ten, enclosed without a letter, though the envelope was always addressed in his uncle's small precise writing. And that was the only communication he had had from him for nearly two years.

Jack was rapidly growing morose and discontented. Harcourt began to get tired of his frequent fits of temper, and more than once showed him pretty plainly that he no longer cared for his society. Jack Moore, a humble clerk in the Three Kingdoms Assurance Office, was not quite

so desirable an acquaintance as Jack Moore, the reputed heir of old Edward Tredinnick, the wealthy merchant. And so, without any compunctions visitings of conscience as to his own share in Jack's misfortunes, Harcourt gradually dropped his former ally and pupil.

The process of being dropped is never a pleasant one, especially when the person undergoing it is conscious that, by rights, their relative positions should be reversed. Jack soon saw what Harcourt was at; and then he realised what a fool he had been to quarrel with his kind old uncle for the sake of such a broken reed as his quondam Mentor.

By the exercise of a great deal of self-denial, he contrived to pay Harcourt the money he owed him. But he still shrank from making any appeal for pecuniary assistance to his uncle, or from taking any steps to bring about a more satisfactory state of things between them. He bitterly resented the apparent harshness with which he had been treated, and the callous indifference which had condemned him to complete banishment from his old home.

Jack's character was undergoing a hardening process, which might have had most unfortunate results, but for a seemingly trivial incident that brought a new interest into his life. In fine weather he usually walked down to his office; but on wet days he indulged in the luxury of an omnibus. One cold and rainy morning in October, Jack started for the City in a mood as dismal as the weather; the omnibuses were crowded, but after some difficulty he secured a seat. Hurrying into the vehicle, he squeezed himself into one of the farther corners; next to him was a preternaturally stout woman, burdened with a big parcel, a baby, and an umbrella that would not have disgraced Mrs Gamp herself. Facing him was a young girl, with a pale oval face, a great deal of ruddy-brown hair, and a pair of the loveliest gray eyes he had ever seen. She was very neatly and simply dressed; her manner was characterised by a certain quiet self-reliance and self-possession, though she was apparently quite young, certainly not more than twenty. Somehow, the sight of the girl's gentle serene countenance made Jack forget the jolting omnibus, the muddy streets, the soaking rain, and the uncomfortable propinquity of his neighbour's Brobdingnagian umbrella. It was impossible to be ill-tempered and discontented when this delicate girl bore the discomfort of her surroundings with such sweet serenity.

She was probably a governess or a lady-clerk, he decided, forced to brave all weathers. For the first time in his life, Jack thoroughly appreciated the excellence of an omnibus as a place for the study of the human face divine. It is not an easy thing to watch one's *vis-à-vis* without seeming to stare rudely, and perhaps Jack would not have accomplished the feat had not the young lady produced a book from the black bag she carried, and immersed herself in it so deeply that she seemed quite oblivious of his scrutiny.

But by the time the Strand was reached the young lady's self-possession was completely upset. When the conductor called out 'All fares,' she put her hand in her pocket, then searched hurriedly in her bag. The colour flooded her cheeks, and her hands shook nervously as she

again turned over the contents of her bag. Then she looked up and met Jack's eyes.

'You have left your purse at home?' he said with a smile.

'Yes—I am afraid so.'

Instantly the necessary pence were handed by Jack to the conductor. Waterloo Station was the young lady's destination.

'Fortunately, I always carry my season ticket in my bag, or I should be obliged to go back home, and then I should miss my train,' she said naively when she had thanked Jack for his courtesy.

In her hurried search for her purse the book she had been reading had slipped from her lap and fallen face downwards on the floor of the omnibus. Jack stooped to pick it up; there was an inscription on the fly-leaf, at which he could not refrain from glancing quickly: 'Mirah Lester'; then followed a date, which he had not time to read.

Just then the omnibus stopped at the corner of Wellington Street. Jack handed the volume to its owner, who, with a bright smile and a hasty 'Thank you,' got out, and was soon lost in the crowd.

The whole affair had not occupied more than five minutes; but as the omnibus rumbled on down Fleet Street and up Ludgate Hill, Jack's thoughts were turned into a new and delightful channel, and he blessed the happy chance which had caused him to enter that particular vehicle.

'Mirah Lester—what a pretty name! It suits the owner. Wonder who she is and where the season ticket carries her?' he soliloquised mentally. 'I suppose she travels down from Waterloo every day. Wonder if I shall ever meet her again?'

Several weeks passed, but Jack did not see the young lady with the gray eyes, though he never failed to look out for her on his way down to the City. He purposely travelled daily by omnibus, in the hope of having her for a fellow-traveller. On one occasion he fancied he caught a glimpse of her at Oxford Circus; but the slight figure vanished before he could ascertain its identity.

Had he not been obliged to be at his office punctually at ten o'clock, it is possible that he might have hung about the Waterloo terminus, and ascertained for what station on the South-western line Mirah Lester was daily bound. He did so after office hours; but his quest was vain. In all probability she returned to town earlier or much later in the afternoon. The difficulties he experienced only added to the interest he felt in her; and the constant watching for a glimpse of the sweet face that had so deeply impressed him with a certainty of the goodness and innocence of its owner, diverted his thoughts from brooding over his own grievances and wrongs.

There was still, however, a latent smouldering of anger in his breast when he thought of his uncle. He considered that he had been treated badly, and he was as determined as ever not to make any advances towards him.

'He bade me leave his house. If he wishes to see me, he will send for me,' he thought sullenly.

One morning he found a letter on his break-

fast table, at sight of which his smouldering wrath momentarily blazed up. 'The quarterly cheque sent without a word—flung at me, like a bone to a dog!' he said, taking up the letter and scrutinising the superscription.

On looking at it more closely, he fancied the handwriting was less clear and distinct than formerly. Keeping the letter still unopened in his hand, he continued to scan the address with knitted brows. 'The old fellow is as hard as flint,' he muttered. 'In two years he has not made a single attempt to see me or to make any effort to win me back. I wonder how he can reconcile it to his conscience to treat me with such contemptuous indifference.' Then he glanced moodily at the letter in his hand. 'I have half a mind to throw this in the fire,' he said aloud. 'Wonder if he would take any notice if the cheque was never presented for payment? Wonder if he would think me dead? Wonder if he would care?'

He moved a step or two nearer the fire, burning dully in the narrow grate. Just then a German band in the street below struck up a merry *Volkslied*. Jack paused to listen. The gay, lilting air was surely very familiar to him. He began to seek in his memory for the association connected with it. And then there suddenly flashed on his mind a scene of his early childhood: his young mother, with a smile on her pretty, winsome face, bribing him with the promise of a song to be good and not cry when Uncle Tredinnick asked him to kiss him. The song she had sung had been that very *Volkslied* the street band was then playing under his window. The sullen look died out of Jack's eyes.

'Poor old boy!' he muttered, looking at the unopened envelope. 'I won't burn the cheque; perhaps he has written a line or two this time.'

As the music floated up through the murky air, he at last tore open the envelope. It contained a letter, but no cheque. The letter began 'DEAR JACK'; but when he had read it through, a look of perplexity came into his face; then the blood rushed to his cheeks and the hand holding the letter began to shake violently. He read it a second and a third time, and then he thoroughly understood what had happened. The letter ran as follows :

THE BAY TREES, WIMBLEDON, Nov. 17, 188—.

DEAR JACK—The change of residence, necessitated by my weakened health, has not had the beneficial result I anticipated. During the last few days I have had various unfavourable symptoms, which make me fear that my time in this world will be short. I therefore think it is my duty to set my house in order.

Please draw up a Will as follows: £1000 each to the various London Hospitals; an annuity of £50 to my faithful servant Jedidiah Thrupp; £1000 to be invested in Consols in the name of my nephew, John Tredinnick Moore, the interest to be paid to him, by you, quarterly. The residue of my property, real and personal, to be left in trust to my friends, James Heritage, clerk in Holy Orders; and Philip Morgan of Arnott Hall, Beckenham, Kent. This trust-money I desire them to employ in founding a College for the Higher Education of deserving Young Men of

the Working-classes, who shall be nominated by the various School Boards of the United Kingdom. The candidates will be required to pass a competitive examination, conducted by eight Professors of the London University.

Kindly follow these instructions, and bring the Will to my house to-morrow afternoon. I am anxious to get it signed without delay.—Yours sincerely,

EDWARD TREDINNICK.

JOHN POUNCEMORE, Esq.,
Lincoln's Inn Fields.

For at least five minutes Jack sat motionless, his hands interlaced and resting on the letter, which he had spread out on his knees; his eyes staring at the line of gray sky visible above the tops of the opposite houses. 'So that is what it means,' he said at last under his breath; 'I am to be practically disinherited.' Then he held out the sheet of paper at arm's length and read it slowly through again from beginning to end. 'Higher Education of deserving Young Men of the Working-classes—indeed,' he exclaimed indignantly; 'and I am cut off with a paltry thousand! A nice way to treat your sole surviving relation, Uncle Tredinnick, upon my word! A thousand pounds! The old skinflint! Even Thrupp, the butler, comes off better than I. Too bad! Yes, I'm shot if it isn't too bad!'

He rose from his chair, took two or three turns up and down the room, gazed savagely at the leaden clouds, through which a pale sun tried to force its way, made an irritable snatch at the blind with a grumbling remark about the 'glare,' and dragged it half-way down the sash. Then he glanced with disgust at the fried bacon, the rolls and coffee, his landlady had set on the table. The perusal of his uncle's letter had effectually destroyed his appetite. He threw himself again into his chair with the open letter in his hand. The envelope had fallen to the ground; he picked it up and read the address. 'Put the letter into the wrong cover—he wouldn't have made such a mistake two years ago,' he meditated. 'Hints in his letter that he is breaking up. Shouldn't wonder if he is—and serve him right for treating me so badly.'

Then Jack's face grew very pale; he clenched his teeth, and a sudden light came into his eyes. An evil thought had that moment darted into his brain. Why should he send on the letter to old Pouncemore? If his uncle misdirected his envelopes, that was no business of his!

Underlying this thought was another, embodying a most subtle temptation. His uncle was ill, so ill, perhaps, that by the time it was discovered that the letter to Pouncemore had miscarried, he might be incapable of giving instructions for drawing up a will. If he died intestate, Jack, as his next of kin, would succeed to the whole of his uncle's fortune. And, argued the tempter, was not he the only son of old Tredinnick's only sister, and had he not therefore a better right to his uncle's wealth than a set of unknown deserving young men of the working-classes?

Two red spots began to burn in Jack's pale cheeks, and his eyes shone feverishly as he thus dallied with the specious temptation. Then he tried to make terms with his better self. If he did evil by suppressing the letter, he would do

good by bestowing certain gifts to the charities enumerated by his uncle. He would use his wealth worthily. He would turn his back for ever on Harcourt and his dissipated friends. He would begin life over again.

Then he pictured what sort of existence would be his if that unjust will were made and signed, and if his uncle died without revoking or destroying it. He would have the interest of one thousand pounds, and the one pound a week he earned at the office of the Three Kingdoms Life Assurance, to live on, with little prospect of bettering his position. What a life of sordid drudgery awaited him! Surely it was not right that his uncle should be so unforgiving as to carry his resentment beyond the grave! And, reasoned the tempter, was it not by a direct interposition of Providence that the letter had come into his hands? Why should he interfere with its decrees? He had only to remain passive, and things would right themselves. But for a sentimental memory invoked by a gay strain of music, he would have thrown the letter unopened into the fire, and there would have been an end of it. He wished he had. His conscience would not then have been troubled by any tiresome doubts. He wished he had destroyed the letter unread.

Then he thought of his mother, of her hatred of untruth, of the prayers she had taught him, of the songs she had sung as lullabies in winter firelights and summer gloamings. What would she have thought of this contemplated baseness of his? And yet—was he not her only son—was he not old Tredinnick's nephew? Who could have a better right to his fortune! He looked at the letter and then at the fire. One movement of his hand, and the letter would be as if it had never been written.

Just then the clock on the mantel-piece struck half-past nine. He would be late at his office; he must take an omnibus though the morning was fine. He smiled bitterly as he thought of the small economies and cheese-parings of his life. His uncle's fortune amounted to fully sixty thousand pounds. All that money might be his if he just omitted to send on a misdirected letter!

ST OLAF'S DAY IN THE FAROES.

ST OLAF'S Day, the 29th of July, is a very great day indeed in Thorshavn, the capital of the Faroes. That very remote little town, of about twelve hundred inhabitants, cannot be said at any time to be remarkable for its liveliness; but such diversion as it can offer to the stranger seems all compressed into the sixteen or eighteen hours of daylight on this most festive of anniversaries.

It is a day of responsibility for the Governor of the islands, who ordinarily has little enough to do, and whose somewhat frigid drawing-room does not receive many visitors of the diplomatic or aught other kind. He has to represent His Majesty King Christian, and, with a certain amount of state, open the Lagthring, or local House of Parliament. He has also, in the evening, to preside at the traditional banquet, over the claret of which the esteemed members of the Lagthring

become almost indecorously noisy as the speeches proceed and the number of empty bottles increases. Nor does this end the day. For after the procession to church, the opening of Parliament, the afternoon receptions, and the evening feast, there is further a famous dance in one of the Thorshavn rooms, and the populace will think it kind of him if he will squeeze into their midst and perspire with them for a few minutes. This last is the worst ordeal of all. But even in humdrum Faroe it is well for the representative of royalty to be as democratic as his temperament will permit. Here are no cables with the mainland to keep the Faroese posted in the movements of the Reds and the Labour struggles. For all that, the islanders are sufficiently intelligent to know that the days of Harold the Fairhaired are long past, and that every man is nearly as good as every other man.

Almost from daybreak the little harbour of Thorshavn (Thor's port) assumes gala dress on this great festival. The gunboat which may chance to have called at the Faroes on its way from Greenland to Copenhagen is gay with bunting, and fires a gun periodically. The two or three Norwegian barques here for codfish, and the green-hulled Spanish ship in the North seas for the same purpose, pay the like tribute of bunting to the saint of the day; and anon send their men ashore to drink cheap wines and smoke cheap cigars with the rest of the world. But these are trivial manifestations compared with the excitement of the arrival of one boatload of people after another from the other islands. It is no joke facing the currents and squalls of the Faroe seas; but the Faroese are not to be deterred from their annual revel by any terrors of this kind. They come in their best clothes, with clean red-and-black mob caps on their heads—blue-and-black if they are in mourning—and attended by a swarm of their blue-eyed, flax-haired female relatives of all ages. And they are greeted in Thorshavn by their kindred with the utmost warmth; and all day long they are free to eat cake, drink wine, and smoke cigars in honour of the saint, King Christian, and the blood-ties that make hospitality a duty as well as a pleasurable privilege.

Every one who can attends church in the morning, and listens with interest to the patriotic oration which it behoves the Dean of the Isles to deliver from the pulpit. His Excellency the Governor, with cocked-hat and gold lace and sword, sits by the altar, and bows a great many times during the service; and afterwards he shakes hands with the Dean, and having—as it seems—whispered word of the evening banquet, at which the ecclesiastic must by no means forget to be present, he marches down the aisle, followed by the Sheriff, the Sysslemen, and the other principal members of this island community of about eleven thousand individuals. The organ peals, the little pigtailed damsels from outlying islets stare wonderingly, and the more irreverent of the Thorshavn boys follow the great folks until they have dispersed each one to his own house, to recruit and prepare for the parliamentary ordeal to ensue in an hour or two.

This second stage in the day's proceedings is quite diverting. Among the thirty or forty mem-

bers of Parliament present, some are sure to be new, not only to senatorial work, but perhaps also even to such metropolitan magnificence as little Thorshavn can offer them. They are stiff big-boned fellows, and they have not changed their usual homespun serge for anything like a black coat. They are embarrassed by their hands and feet; and much embarrassed by the gaze of their more veteran comrades, some of whom are not above being cynical in a mild way at their expense. They even seem to envy the usher—in untanned cow-skin moccasins—who directs them into their places with so fine an air of easy authority. One knows as well as if their minds were laid bare to the world, that they are longing to be back in their snug little farms, among the hay and the litter of codfish heads which tell so eloquently of the fine catch of yesterday in the fiord hard by.

Parliament House itself is not, however, a building that ought to appal them. They probably have barns at home quite as large, if less lofty, and provided with fewer windows. It is only some fifteen paces in length by about five in width; and for furniture it contains nothing more striking than a tall old clock, a bust of the king, and a horseshoe table neatly set out with inkpots, pens, blotting-paper, and Reports of the work of the previous session. They themselves give animation to the room; and so do the two or three dozen members of the commonalty who take places in the gallery allotted for the public.

On this the opening day no routine work has to be done, unless the methodical handshaking with the Governor and the 'Hip! hip!' of patriotic joy at mention of King Christian's name may be so regarded. Still the session lasts some little time. Papers have to be signed—a lengthy business for some of the members, who are evidently not at home with their pens. Senatorial gossip warms their hearts, and sets the more modest of them somewhat at their ease. One does not doubt their chatter is of no exalted kind. It is talk about oxen and crops and cod-fish catches. No matter. The bust of the king dignifies it; and so, when the sitting is dissolved, every one moves cheerfully, as if possessed by the pleasing consciousness that he has done his duty, both as a citizen and a member of the Lagthing.

Once again on the edge of the moor—purple with heath—it is well to return to the town and see how the honest Faroese are enjoying themselves. A few of them are perhaps by this time a little tipsy, even thus early in the day. But Thorshavn is a free port; wines and spirits are so cheap, and St Olaf's feast is such an important one, that the islanders cannot altogether restrain themselves. The calls of hospitality, too, are distinctly onerous. The man from Kalsoe—that rugged northern isle—has a score of friends in the capital. He sees them perhaps twice a year, perhaps only on the 29th of July. Shall he chill their affection for him by refusing to drink with them? He cannot be so churlish; and it is these constant 'skalds' that make him a little hilarious ere two o'clock. His wife, good soul, laughs joyously at his predicament. She would think less well of him if he carried a demure,

chilling face with him wherever he made his calls. Such are the simple habits of the Faroese.

For centuries it has been the custom in Faroe thus to make the most of St Olaf's Day. An old island writer reminds us of it: 'When the Thing [or Lagthing] business was over, the evening was given up to recreation or familiar intercourse; the bards stood forth and sang ballads about the chief events of long-distant and recent times. Men who seldom met now disclosed their minds to each other. Buying and selling were stopped, and gave place to other engagements. The young men on this occasion made acquaintance with the maidens who attended their fathers or near relatives, and many a one journeyed to the Thing to get a bride, or returned therefrom as a bridegroom.'

It is interesting in the light of this reading to mark the processions of girls and youths on the rugged little roads which stretch for a mile or so outside the town. They are exceedingly vivacious, and the blue eyes of the chubby damsels sparkle with latent or evident coquettishness. The lads follow with less alacrity. They have not studied courtship as a fine art. They are rather perplexed, indeed, between the sense that as suitors they are not playing the part that best becomes them, and that sweet instinct of yearning which will not allow them to turn their backs upon the girls and betake themselves to some more active and manly form of exercise. Thus they are led up and down among the basalt blocks and heather of the suburbs, and perhaps as far as the great waterfall at the foot of the mountains where they rise towards the ancient ecclesiastical settlement of Kirkebo. They resolve to atone for this futile dalliance later in the evening, when the great ball opens.

Of the parliamentary banquet towards eight o'clock much of a serio-comic kind might be written. It takes place in the room under the Senate Chamber. Great is the concourse of candles and dishes and bottles; and while the members, with the few privileged guests, stand talking together outside in the cool air, they see the pasties and cakes and things carried past them from the town into the banquet-room. It is essentially a speech-dinner. The Governor proposes 'the King' almost as soon as the first pie is passed round; and no time is lost in following up one toast with another. This circulates the claret rapidly. Sandwiches of ham and beef and cheese follow the pie; then buttered biscuits and sweet cakes. These last are a feature of the repast. They stand about the tables tall and ornate with sugary decorative work, like so many bridecakes. Nor can it be denied that they taste very good—although the hypercritical stranger may be oppressed with grim fancies that whale oil is one of their constituent parts instead of butter. Indeed, they prove so attractive to the banqueters that the temptation to pocket sections of them is irresistible to more than one member of Parliament, who doubtless wishes to share his pleasure with those little round-faced effigies of himself which consecrate his farm a score or so of miles away. But the Governor condones this larceny, even as he condones the condition of certain other members long ere the feast is ended. He may not think much of the civilisation of the Faroes. Yet he knows that Den-

mark has relatively few colonies, and that in his application for removal from this little archipelago he may, for aught he can tell, be sentencing himself to Greenland or Iceland, both even more distant from Copenhagen than the bleak stone residence above the Bay of Thorshavn. St Olaf's Day, like Christmas, comes but once a year; some license may therefore be permitted to accompany it.

Throughout the feast there is a constant ripple of speeches. One gentleman after another rises to say something, to flourish his wine-glass, nod enthusiastically to his particular friends, and finally collapse upon his chair, exhausted by the oratorical strain, or pulled thither by his neighbours, who conceive that he has said as much as becomes him. For the Church, of course the Prost or Dean responds. He is one of the handsomest men in Faroe, with a demeanour almost regal; and exceedingly well suited to him is the white neck frill of office, which recalls the Elizabethan ruffs in England. Law and medicine, too, each have to be answered for. The doctor probably makes a jest about 'la grippe,' which in one form or another—notably as the Kruim, or epidemic of colds, which seems a characteristic of spring and the arrival of strangers here, as in St Kilda—often afflicts little Faroe, though it does not seem to be a very fatal scourge. As for the law, it cannot be said to flourish in the archipelago. An island community of this kind, where most people are cousins to each other, and the tenures of property are of a simple nature, is a bad field for litigation. Still, for the sake of effect, there are two or three advocates in the isles, though they no doubt sigh for the animation and clients of Copenhagen with all their heart.

If a stranger be present, his own health will in all probability be drunk, and he may be toasted in French. Of the assembled members of Parliament naturally not one in ten understands anything of the language of Molière. It is an accomplishment that pertains to those only who have lived their student days in the Danish capital. Nor do they claim to be very expert in it. There is not much intercourse with France up here. The claret and cognac in the Thorshavn stores do not necessarily come direct from Bordeaux in French bottoms. Only once in a way a warship flying the tricolour looks in at Thorshavn after a spell off the Iceland fishing-banks, where she has been dallying for a number of weeks to protect the interests of the French fishers for cod.

At length, however, there is a general rise from table; and the Scandinavian tournament of hand-shaking begins. This is a most laborious affair for a man unused to the exercise. It behoves a person to touch palm with every one present, after which only is he free to go his way with a clear conscience. As some of the guests are by this time 'merry,' it is a lengthy business to part from them. Their friends do their best to enable them to make a pretence of dignity during the last few minutes of the official day; but one wonders how they will be got home through the darkness outside and up and down the miry rough alleys which are Thorshavn's apologies for streets.

From the banquet-room to the ballroom is a

very proper transition for the more enterprising of the feasters. The room is hired by subscription. It is not waxed, nor is it decorated with aught except oil lamps. One steers for it by the heavy sound of many feet on the boards. At the entrance the Thorshavn children stand in a crowd, gazing with admiration at the shadowy procession of men and maids at the upper windows. They are not old enough to be admitted. We others, however, are able to please ourselves; and so, with considerable effort, we squeeze into the midst of the mass of hot Faroe folk, whose faces are streaming with perspiration. There is not much to learn in a Faroe national dance. We do no wrong, therefore, to the symmetry of the dance by joining hands in one of the circles which exist as best they can in so close a compass. The fiddle squeaks, and from men and maids goes forth a low song, while their feet begin to move. The circle tries to rotate. It does not succeed very well, but still the song continues. The words of the song are old Faroese—a language that has no grammar, and which rarely gets printed. 'Love-nonsense' of course is the foundation upon which they are built. And in the pressure of hands during this solemn pretence of a dance, and in the tender glances between one red face and another, one discerns more 'love-nonsense.'

Adjacent to this big room, in which the fishermen and girls find their pleasure, is another smaller one, where the daughters of the officials and others dance politer dances with the students of law, medicine, and theology home for the holidays, and with the sons of the more considerable towns-people. The fun here is of a milder kind. But here, as well as in the big room, the sport lasts for hours after the members of Parliament have been led to their beds by their devoted wives. Indeed, St Olaf's Day is past and over ere the dance in honour of it is at an end.

It was in the year 1024 that Olaf the Holy was acknowledged king in Faroe. Every 29th of July ought to recall to Faroese minds this sacrifice of the island independence nearly nine centuries ago. As a matter of fact, the day is one of mere enjoyment, quite unattended with patriotic pangs of any kind.

THE ISLAND OF THE DEAD.

A WEST-AFRICAN ADVENTURE.

BY DAVID KER.

'MISTARE KER, now sall we give you sometings to write to your papere. This day you come vid me up de rivare, you zee von island vere live all de dead men in dis countree!'

So spoke a hospitable Dutch trader on the 'Ivory Coast,' who had sheltered us ever since a huge wave dashed up on to the beach at his very door, six days earlier, the water-logged boats in which Mrs Ker and I and our fellow-passengers were escaping from our sinking ship. He and his partner—the only white men in the whole district—had treated us with the utmost kindness, at great inconvenience to themselves; and he was now about to make a journey of several miles up the Cestos River—at the mouth of which we had

been cast away—solely to obtain a fresh supply of food for us from Jenor-Flan, one of the half-dozen black 'kings' of the neighbourhood.

Despite the flagrant 'bull' with which good Mynheer Everts's speech ended, it was abundantly impressive; for the chance of seeing a real native burial-place in this wild region—which was what I supposed 'the island where dead men live' to be—was not to be thrown away. I agreed at once, and we set off that very afternoon.

Not the least difficult part of the voyage is the getting into our boat to begin it; for in West Africa, as on the Upper Nile, a 'landing-place' means simply a wide waste of thick brownish-black mud, in all stages of unsoundness, from the unsubstantial beauty of treacle to the sturdy compactness of Welsh-rabbit. Through this delectable stuff you are carried pickaback by a stalwart native; and should your bearer slip or stumble, you are likely to realise in all its terrible fullness the story of the Irishman who came shouting into a village to seek help for his master, who was 'up to the ankles in a bog.' 'If he's no deeper than that,' said a man, 'he can surely get out by himself.' 'Yis,' cried Paddy; 'but he wint in head first!'

In this new character of 'public burdens,' we have a rather awkward embarkation. Our worthy Mynheer's long gaunt limbs, struggling in the clutch of a powerful black, suggest a negro Laocoön fighting two remarkably active snakes; and our brawny Scotch engineer, borne with difficulty by two men together through the shallow lagoon, looks somewhat wrathful when I hint that he would make an excellent illustration of Tennyson's famous couplet :

Broad-based upon the people's will,
And compassed by th' inviolate sea.

But all is at length ready, and, propelled by six stalwart Kroomen—who are attired in a uniform consisting chiefly of two brass rings and a leopard's tooth—we soon lose sight of the little trading hut, perched on a bush-clad neck of land between the river and the sea.

And now, in one instant, the gloomy horror of the dreariest place on earth—the mouth of an African river—falls around us like a pall. Look which way we will, nothing is to be seen but the black shadowy masses of the leathery mangroves, thrusting themselves out over the thick, foul, slimy water; while through the dark leaves that coil around each other like writhing snakes, the rank white fever-mist creeps sullenly upward, like a breath of pestilence sent forth from the jaws of Death himself. Ever and anon, the swirl of the eddies in the wake of our boat leaves bare a broad flat mudbank, into the black, glistening surface of which the gaunt, white, claw-like mangrove roots dig themselves hungrily, as if sucking their vampire nourishment from the fathomless depth of slimy rottenness below.

But more gloomy by far than all the outward hideousness of this evil place is its sinister, tomb-

like silence. No sight, no sound of life breaks the horrible and unnatural repose of this ghastly maze of distorted vegetation, which realises grimly that awful forest seen by Dante in the regions of the dead, every tree of which was an agonised human form, writhing in torture as the merciless beaks of the harpies tore its living boughs. The desolation of untamed abundance—worse a thousand-fold than that so-called ‘desolation’ of barrenness which I have seen in the depths of the Sahara and the great Tartar deserts—is around us in all its terrors.

About a mile and a half up the river, we pass a projecting sand-spit on our right, upon which the riven trunk of a huge tree, white and blasted and dead, stands gauntly up against the dark background of thickets.

‘This reminds me of “Demon’s Point,” on the Lower Gambia,’ said I, ‘where there is a blasted tree standing out into the stream, just like this one; and the negroes, whenever they pass it, throw food and other things into the water as an offering to the evil spirits. This place seems to produce a similar effect upon the nerves of your bold mariners here, Mynheer.’

In fact, our native boatmen—ordinarily as brave fellows as ever faced a lion or a crocodile—were now beginning to show visible signs of terror, which Mynheer Everts explained by telling me in a whisper that we were now nearing the Island of the Dead. Such an announcement, made amid the voiceless gloom of a region that seemed given over to death and decay, could scarcely be heard without some emotion, even by those who were proof against the superstitious terrors of the savages around us. None of us could tell what we might be about to see; and I, remembering the hundred human skulls which I had found piled up in the king of Bonny’s ‘fetich-house,’ felt more excited than I would have cared to own when, a few minutes later, we turned suddenly to the right just at the point where this gloomy stream was widened by the junction of a smaller river, and glided beneath a curtain of overhanging boughs, which, amid the cheerless twilight that filled this world of shadows, looked weirdly like skeleton hands outstretched to seize us.

And now the dreaded spot lay before us at last—a small, irregular mass of bare rock, cut off on every side by the sullen waters from the living world of men. At all points but one it was hopelessly steep and slippery; but close to where we had halted, a low, flat ledge of rock offered a convenient landing-place, and here I swung myself ashore by the overarching branches, Mynheer Everts cautioning me in an undertone, as I did so, not to remain so long as to offend the prejudices of the superstitious savages beside us, who were already beginning to seem rather restive at what must have appeared to them a most daring and wanton impiety.

Scrambling over three or four rugged and slippery boulders, I came suddenly upon a tableau, which, with its strange mingling of grotesqueness and horror, would have made a worthy study for Doré or Vereshchagin. Before me lay a deep, narrow hollow, not unlike a grave itself, in which, just where the goblin shadows of the distorted trees overhead fell deepest and blackest, stood two rude wooden cases, partly covered with those

coarse striped cloths familiar to all who have been on the ‘Kroo Coast.’ What the ghastly contents of these strange caskets might be, was not hard to guess; but, as if to place the matter beyond a doubt, there lay strewn around them a number of human skulls and bones, white and sapless—for in this fearful place there was not even earth enough to hide the dead, and their corpses were left uncovered beneath the open sky, to moulder slowly away.

After what I had already seen of African customs, I needed no one to tell me that the scattered bones were those of slaves who had been slaughtered beside the corpses of their chiefs, in accordance with that grim and seemingly worldwide superstition which, in the Far West, once buried the Indian chief’s war-horse in his master’s grave, and, in the Far East, consumed the Hindu widow on her husband’s funeral pile.

But with the black horror of a scene that might have matched the weirdest fancies of Nathaniel Hawthorne or Nikolai Gogol was grotesquely mingled an alloy of coarse and fanciful absurdity. All around the fatal spot, the rocks were thickly strewn with potsherds, old hats, broken clay pipes, fragments of bottles and dishes, snapped knife-blades, tin pans, and greasy shreds of clothing, with which the bones of the murdered slaves were hideously intermingled; for, according to the childlike superstition of the African savage, the slaying of a chief’s retainers on his tomb, and the destroying there of all the articles which he used when in life, will send the ghosts of the slaves to serve their master with pipe and cup in the world of spirits as in that of men.

Even this dismal den, however, is not wholly unredeemed. Over the miserable wrecks of mortality that lie strewn around it, the graceful syringa has twined lovingly its bright and tender blossoms, combating with its rich fragrance the foul reek of corruption—a mute but eloquent parable of how, amid the worst decay and degradation of man, spring up inexhaustibly the love and mercy of God.

And so I have seen all, and may depart. In truth, it is full time; for so overpowering is the hot, stifling air sent forth from this place of death, that even my experience of Eastern plague-hospitals cannot enable me to bear up against it. But, in the hurry to get away from it, I make more haste than good speed; for my foot slips as I leap from one boulder to another, and I narrowly escape following down into the river a huge stone dislodged by my stumble. At the splash, an answering ripple breaks the oily surface, and up through the thick sullen waters starts ghost-like—fit sentinel indeed for this ghastly spot—the horny snout, flat ugly head, grinning fangs, and broad, scaly, mud-plastered back, of a gigantic crocodile!

At sight of their favourite game, our stalwart Kroonen, shaking off in a moment the nightmare influence of the dreaded island, break the tomb-like silence with a joyful clamour, and make a snatch at their knives and muskets, as if meaning to attack the monster forthwith. But the river-pirate, finding himself balked of his expected prey, gives a vicious snap of his mighty jaws, and, turning himself round with one powerful sweep of his huge notched tail, vanishes spec-

trally into the gloomy depths below, while I scramble back into the boat again, having learned in those few minutes how even death itself can be made at once frightful and ridiculous.

NOT GENERALLY KNOWN.

EACH time we reach the end of December, we should think with satisfaction that we have got over the most dangerous month, since in this country more deaths are said to occur in December than at any other time of the year. A subject for serious reflection is it that thirty-five millions of people die every year—few of these from old age. In a doctor's opinion, nearly as many people shorten their career by over-eating as from excessive drinking; while in England alone three hundred persons are annually cut off through accidental poisoning.

It seems that we have the choice of two hundred and seventy religions in the United Kingdom; and our taste for sensational novels is shown when thirty per cent. of books published belong to that class. Some of the busiest steel pens of the three and a half millions said to be daily used all over the world are wielded by the fictionists.

In this country, it appears, we have one horse for every twelve persons, and only an average of four hours of daily sunshine in which to ride or walk. A celebrated aéronaut asserts, after patient investigation, that the ninth day of the moon is the most rainy of the whole twenty-eight, and four o'clock in the afternoon the rainiest hour of the day.

It may not be generally known that four men in every six use tobacco; yet a medical man in Vienna asserts that diphtheria is thrice as prevalent amongst smokers as those who deny themselves the luxury of the weed.

We are told that children's hair grows more quickly than that of adults. Some say that light-haired people are longer lived than their brethren with dark locks, which is not so consoling to the latter, since more than half of the inhabitants of this country have dark-brown hair.

As a rule, women require one hour of sleep more a day than men. Fewer of the latter reach the age of fifty than the former, but afterwards the sterner sex has the best of it. It has also been found that single women live longer than single men, while married women on an average live two years longer than single ones. A woman's chance of getting married is calculated to be only two and a half per cent. when she reaches her fortieth year. As there are still more men than women in the United States, more of the fair sex should emigrate; as it is, four men emigrate to three women. There is said to be only one sudden death amongst women to eight amongst men. A medical man tells us that the habit among women of biting off the thread when sewing is the chief cause of blood-poisoning. It seems that twenty-five per cent. of the women of this country earn their own living; but one would scarcely believe that there are nearly three hundred and fifty female blacksmiths in England, which, however, sounds no

stranger than the statement that women may now be seen driving cabs in New York.

Few blue-eyed people are said to be colour-blind, and we are told that women as a rule have better eyesight than men; but, on the other hand, three women have false teeth to every two men that wear them. This, we take it, is owing to their greater regard for personal appearance, than that the fair sex is more dentally deficient than their admirers. It is not without interest to note that not a few people living have double rows of natural teeth; while we are assured by an artist that only one person in four thousand eight hundred has a perfect nose.

Though we are told that blindness is on the decrease, it is sad to reflect that three hundred thousand people in Europe suffer from this dreadful affliction. Spain appears to be the greatest sufferer in this respect. An oculist tells us that scarcely one in twenty of watchmakers suffer from weak eyes; and we learn from a doctor that stammering is almost unknown amongst savages. Is this infirmity, then, one of the penalties we pay for civilisation? It would seem that nearly a quarter of all cases of insanity are hereditary, and animals are not free from this visitation.

We hear, on the authority of a recruiting sergeant, that few men have legs of equal length, and that in every thousand men in the British army only eighteen are over six feet in height, which our national vanity prompts us to remark seems a small number. The conclusion is arrived at, that a man's full mental power is not reached before the age of twenty-five, and the development of talent is most marked between the ages of thirty and forty-five years.

Those who notice the rapid growth of their finger-nails should be happy, for it is considered to indicate good health. Yorkshire is said to be the most healthy county in England; but it is a reflection when we are reminded that in Great Britain the yearly loss in wages through ill-health is about eleven millions sterling, and it is estimated that forty per cent. of those who start in business fail, March being considered the slackest month for business. Yet, as a set-off to this disconcerting intelligence, it is affirmed that the average duration of life is considerably longer in this country than in France, for example. Is this because nearly three times as much meat is eaten by us as by the French? No wonder the average Britisher is as strong as two Hindus. Quakers are said, we know not with what truth, to be unusually long-lived.

It is also asserted that the proportionate number of births in Russia is nearly double that of France; while the German population increases faster than that of any other country. France has the cheapest rate of postage, but possesses a capital in which it is said more murders take place in six months than occur in London, Berlin, and Vienna together, in twice that length of time; but altogether more murders take place in the United States than in any other country. The Americans must not be very fond of tea, when they drink eight times as much coffee as the beverage that does not inebriate. A yearly outlay of five millions shows their enterprise in advertising.

It may be interesting to note that Belgium is declared to be the most intemperate country in Europe; that Italy sends five million eggs to England every week; that Spain has fewer daily papers than any other European country; and that most German papers are owned and edited by Jews. In Germany, married men wear wedding rings, a custom which many writers have advocated in this country. Only ten per cent. of German school-boys are said to go in for athletics. We are assured by an employer of German clerks that they work twenty per cent. slower than English ones.

Consumption is believed to be more prevalent in Ireland than in either England or Wales. Four times more Irishmen reside in the United States than Englishmen. It is more difficult to believe the statement that sixty thousand people in the Emerald Isle speak Irish only; or another, that there are forty thousand mud cabins in that country consisting of but a single room. Yet this is the country in which we are told suicide is less prevalent than in any other, which speaks volumes for Pat's light-heartedness. It has been noticed how women mostly commit suicide by drowning, and men by shooting. By the way, suicide is less common amongst miners than any other class of people; and self-destruction, strangely enough, is said to be most prevalent amongst soldiers. Speaking of the military, it may be mentioned that there are eight soldiers located in Ireland to one in Scotland, and that over twenty boys under eighteen years of age have won the Victoria Cross.

Sad is the thought that an average of three British seamen lose their lives every day by drowning, and that three hundred British steamers and sailing-vessels are lost at sea yearly. It is a subject for congratulation to think that of the total number of ships which annually pass through the Suez Canal, nearly eighty per cent. fly the British flag. The speed of our fastest ocean steamers is now greater than that of the express trains on Italian railways. Express trains in Russia rarely travel faster than twenty-two miles an hour. These are very slow expresses, indeed, to ours, yet a railway guard assures us that the fastest trains are always the safest. It is satisfactory to learn that during last year only one person in forty-five million passengers was killed by a railway accident.

We are told that the English of our day is considered by a high authority almost perfect, alike for the purpose of the orator, the philosopher, the lecturer, and the poet. The purest English is said to be spoken in Lincolnshire. There are four times as many words in our language as there are in the French, yet a philologist estimates that the coinage of new words in our tongue goes on at the rate of one hundred annually.

Each person in this country sends on an average forty-four letters yearly through the post, which only lets twenty go astray out of every million letters which go through it. It may not be uninteresting to mention that one person in every nine is left-handed, or that clergymen come next in number to mechanics under the head of inventors. Edison states that very few people know the sound of their own voices.

It is not inspiring to hear that only fifty-four per cent. of the poor-rates are spent in relieving the poor, and to reflect that over a quarter of each generation die before attaining the age of seventeen; but a man thirty-two years of age may expect to live for another thirty-two.

If you wish to increase your chances of life, marry, for, as a rule, married men live longer than bachelors; yet we are told that out of every thousand persons in England more than six hundred are unmarried.

THE SWALLOW'S RETURN.

BLACKBIRD.

AH, you're welcome from your travels, from across the ocean, Swallow!

Did you long for daisied meadows and the gold of gorsy fells,
For the violets in the woodland and the hawthorn of the hollow,
And the mists of bluebells gleaming in the sheltered hazel dells?

SWALLOW.

Nay; for months I never wearied of the mosques, and domes, and towers;

Of the saffron eves and morning, and their still, unbroken calm;
Of the tamarind's scented blossoms; of the champale's sacred flowers;

Of the red flamingos resting by the stately cocoa-palm:

Till I saw a soldier dying once as day broke in its splendour—

I had seen him very often pacing down the garden here,

While a maiden clasped his arm, she smiling at the phrases tender

That I heard him from my dwelling whisper in her willing ear.

And I thought of chestnut blossoms, and of budding beech boughs swinging,

As I heard him in his anguish name that maiden o'er and o'er,

And I longed again to listen to you, Blackbird, gaily singing,

And the brown bees softly humming round the lichenized nest once more.

BLACKBIRD.

So he's dead! Then that's the reason of the maiden's tears and sighing;

That is why she would not hearken to my gayest, loudest strain;

That is why I hear them whisper that she's surely, slowly dying

For her lover!—Well, friend Swallow, you are welcome back again.

M. ROCK.

Printed and Published by W. & R. CHAMBERS, Limited,
47 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON; and EDINBURGH.